WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of locating an item in a network of vending machines, comprising:

receiving, at a vending machine in the network of vending machines, a purchase order for the item;

transmitting, via a network connection, a request for the item; and

receiving, at the vending machine, a response indicative of whether the item is available at at least one other vending machine.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising outputting, from an output device of the vending machine, an indication of the availability of the item.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting comprises transmitting the request to the at least one other vending machine.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein prior to transmitting, the vending machine determines the availability of item at the vending machine, and if the item is not available at the vending machine, then transmitting the request.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the response comprises receiving the response from the at least one other vending machine.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the response comprises receiving the response from a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising outputting to an output device a message indicating whether the item was located at the at least one other vending machine and, if so, indicating a location of the at least one other vending machine.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein if the response is not received within a predetermined period of time, providing an output indicative of the non-availability of the item.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving, at the vending machine, a payment amount for the item; and
receiving, at the vending machine, a refund request for the purchase order.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
receiving, at the vending machine, a payment amount for the item; and
receiving an electronic refund request for the purchase order.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising refunding the payment amount.

12. The method of claim 10, further comprising refunding the payment amount if a corrupted purchase transaction is detected.

13. The method of claim 10, further comprising refunding the payment amount if customer information received through the network connection satisfies refund conditions.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein the refund conditions comprise a threshold number of purchases made by a requestor of the refund.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising, if the item is available at the at least one other vending machine, determining whether a price adjustment is necessary for the item.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein determining whether the price adjustment is necessary comprises determining whether a price of the item is at a maximum value.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein transmitting comprises transmitting the request to a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising, determining, by the control system, whether any of a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines has the item.

19. A vending machine for dispensing items, comprising:

a command input interface for receiving user commands;

a network interface configured to support a network connection with a network of vending machines; and

a processor connected to the command input interface and the network interface, and configured to:

receive purchase orders for items from at least one of the command input interface and the network interface;

process the purchase orders; and

issue a request via the network interface to determine whether an item requested by a user is available at another vending machine of the network of vending machines.

20. The vending machine of claim 19, wherein the processor is further configured to first determine whether the item requested by the user is available at the vending machine before determining whether the item is available at another vending machine.

21. The vending machine of claim 19, wherein the processor is further configured to receive and respond to item requests from the network of vending machines.

22. The vending machine of claim 19, further comprising an output interface configured to indicate whether the item requested by the user is available another vending machine of the network of vending machines.

23. A signal bearing medium, comprising a program which, when executed by a processor, performs a method, comprising:

receiving, at a vending machine in the network of vending machines, a purchase order for the item;

transmitting, via a network connection, a request for the item; and

receiving, at the vending machine, a response indicative of whether the item is available at at least one other vending machine.

24. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, further comprising outputting, from an output device of the vending machine, an indication of the availability of the item.

25. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein transmitting comprises transmitting the request to the at least one other vending machine.

26. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein prior to transmitting, the vending machine determines the availability of item at the vending machine, and if the item is not available at the vending machine, then transmitting the request.

27. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein receiving the response comprises receiving the response from the at least one other vending machine.

28. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein receiving the response comprises receiving the response from a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

29. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, further comprising outputting to an output device a message indicating whether the item was located at the at least one other vending machine and, if so, indicating a location of the at least one other vending machine.

30. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein if the response is not received within a predetermined period of time, providing an output indicative of the non-availability of the item.

31. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, further comprising, if the item is available at the at least one other vending machine, determining whether a price adjustment is necessary for the item.

32. The signal bearing medium of claim 31, wherein determining whether the price adjustment is necessary comprises determining whether a price of the item is at a maximum value.

33. The signal bearing medium of claim 23, wherein transmitting comprises transmitting the request to a control system configured to process item requests for a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines.

34. The signal bearing medium of claim 33, further comprising, determining, by the control system, whether any of a plurality of vending machines of the network of vending machines has the item.

35. A method of requesting a refund for a purchase order of a vending machine item, comprising:

receiving, at a vending machine, a payment amount for the vending machine item;

receiving an electronic refund request for at least a portion of the payment amount; and

determining whether to refund the portion.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein determining whether to refund the portion comprises:

transmitting by the vending machine via a network connection with a network of vending machines, a request for the item at another vending machine in the network of vending machines; and

receiving, at the vending machine, a response indicative of whether the item is available at at least one other vending machine;

if the item is available at at least one other vending machine, providing an option to a refund requestor to retrieve the item at the at least one other vending machine.

37. The method of claim 35, wherein the electronic refund request is received at the vending machine.

38. The method of claim 35 wherein the electronic refund request is received at a refund processing computer networked to the vending machine.

39. The method of claim 35, further comprising refunding the portion of the payment amount.

40. The method of claim 35, wherein determining whether to refund the portion comprises determining whether a requestor of the refund is a repeat customer.

41. The method of claim 35, wherein determining whether to refund the portion comprises determining whether a requestor of the refund has previously requested a vending machine refund within a predetermined time period.

42. The method of claim 35, further comprising receiving, at the vending machine, the purchase order for the vending machine item.

43. The method of claim 35, further comprising refunding the portion if customer information stored in a database satisfies refund conditions.

44. The method of claim 43, wherein the refund conditions comprise a threshold number of purchases made by a requestor of the refund.

45. A vending machine network, comprising:

(a) a first vending machine that generates a location request for a selected item; and

(b) at least one second vending machine, operably connected to the first vending machine, that receives the location request and generates a response indicative of whether the selected item is available.

46. The vending machine network of claim 45, further comprising a signal caring medium that operably connects the first vending machine to the at least one second vending machine.

47. The vending machine network of claim 45, wherein the first vending machine is adapted to receive an electronic refund request; and further comprising a refund processor adapted to process the electronic refund request.

48. A vending machine, comprising:

a network interface configured to transmit a location request for a selected item to a network of vending machines, and to receive a response indicative of whether the selected item is available at another vending machine in the network of vending machines.